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NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

**MACON COUNTY COUPLE PLEADS GUILTY TO CHARGES INVOLVING THE THEFT OF
SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY BENEFITS**

St. Louis, MO: Donald and Mary Hicks pled guilty to charges involving the theft of \$86,534 of Social Security Disability benefits from a couple in their care, United States Attorney Catherine L. Hanaway and Macon Police Chief Steve Olinger announced today.

Between September 1998 and continuing through February 2006, Donald Hicks was authorized to be a representative payee for the benefit of a husband and wife who were both receiving social security disability benefits. The purpose of approving him to be a representative payee was that social security disability checks, payable to the victim payees, would be made payable to Donald Hicks so that he could pay their living expenses. Hicks did pay monthly rent and electricity, but embezzled a substantial amount of the remaining funds for himself and his wife. The disabled couple's residence was often leaking, had inadequate indoor plumbing, as well as heat and the capacity to cook on a stove. Very little money was spent by Mr. Hicks for their benefit. Often Hicks would obtain food for them at a charity food pantry in the Macon, Missouri area. Witnesses told Social Security Administration agents that they saw the wife getting food out of trash containers in the neighborhood. Other neighbors brought them food. The disabled couple told agents that they received little, if any, food from Mr. Hicks. The husband told the agents that from time-to-time he would fix lawnmowers and other small motored appliances for \$20-25 cash. He would give this money to Donald Hicks, who kept the money.

When Donald and Mary Hicks were questioned about these practices, they denied withholding benefits. They also submitted false information reflecting expenditures of the social security money on behalf of the beneficiary/payees.

DONALD HICKS and **MARY HICKS** each pled guilty to one felony count of misuse of social security money on March 19, 2008, before United States District Judge Henry E. Autrey.

Each defendant now faces a maximum penalty of five years in prison and/or fines up to \$250,000. Restitution is mandatory. Sentencing has been set for June 12, 2008.

"The hard work of several of our department's officers, including Detective Pat Henley, has contributed to the success of this case," states Chief Steve Olinger of the Macon Police Department. "Many hours went into the investigative process of this particular case. Our department appreciates the cooperative work of the Kirksville Office of the Federal Bureau

of Investigation and the Social Security Administration-Office of the Inspector General.”

In addition to the Macon Police Department, Hanaway commended the work performed on the case by the Social Security Administration-Office of Inspector General-Office of Investigations, the Kirksville Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and First Assistant United States Attorney Michael W. Reap, who is handling the case for the U.S. Attorney’s Office.